

CITY COUNCIL OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE MINUTES

July 13, 2011

The City Council Oversight Committee of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met at 5:30 p.m. in the City Council Conference Room on the 13th day of July, 2011, and notice and agenda of the meeting were posted in the Municipal Building at 201 West Gray 48 hours prior to the beginning of the meeting.

PRESENT: Councilmembers Dillingham, Spaulding, and Chairman Griffith

ABSENT: Councilmember Gallagher

OTHERS PRESENT: Captain Todd Gibson, Police Department
Mr. Keith Humphrey, Police Chief
Mr. Steve Lewis, City Manager
Mr. Shawn O'Leary, Director of Public Works
Major Kent Ritchie, Police Department
Ms. Syndi Runyon, Administrative Assistant IV
Mr. Keith Allen, Brother's Restaurant
Mr. Greg Fitter, Interested citizen
Mr. Seth Fitter, Interested citizen
Mr. Jerry Hatter, Balfour's
Mr. Rainey Powell, Campus Corner Property Owner
Mr. Jeff Stewart, O'Connell's Restaurant

DISCUSSION REGARDING NON-GAME DAY PARKING IN THE CAMPUS CORNER AREA.

Mr. Steve Lewis, City Manager, said Captain Todd Gibson's responsibilities include overseeing parking enforcement in the City of Norman, which includes Campus Corner and he will be discussing parking issues and respond to questions regarding those issues.

Councilmember Dillingham said two issues the Committee will discuss tonight are commercial delivery truck parking problems and weekend parking meter enforcement on Campus Corner and how the City and Campus Corner merchants/property owners can address the issues.

Captain Gibson said he is the day shift Division Commander, which gives him the opportunity to work with parking issues throughout Norman. He said Campus Corner is a unique area that makes Norman special. He said Campus Corner provides a lot of different services and citizens inside and outside of the community visit Campus Corner to shop, eat, and for entertainment venues. He said along with that uniqueness, problems occur and the Police Department has been working with the merchants and the Campus Corner Association (CCA) to address these problems. He said some Campus Corner property owners/merchants would like to see the parking ordinance amended requiring mandatory enforcement of some parking issues.

Captain Gibson said some of the main issues involve commercial parking, enforcement of daily parking until 6:00 p.m., enforcement on Saturdays, and response times for parking enforcement. He said the lifeline of businesses is their product and if they cannot get their product, they begin to run into problem. He said with the configuration of the streets on Campus Corner, it becomes difficult for commercial vehicles to get products to the merchants. He said, currently, there is a specific period of time that commercial parking is available. Merchants and the Police Department has been reviewing different options to better facilitate the entrance and exit of commercial vehicles without interfering with commerce. He said on Buchanan Street and White Street, there is metered parking from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., and there are commercial designated loading and unloading zones that operate in that twelve hour period. He said from Boyd Street to the midway down the 700 block of

Asp Avenue, there is zoned commercial parking allowed from 3:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. He said this is an area that causes problems because these spaces are meter parking with the commercial parking area marked by signage. He said citizens not familiar with the area and parking rules may park in a metered area during commercial parking times not realizing they are opening themselves up to a potential citation or enforcement action by a Parking Enforcement Officer.

Captain Gibson said he meets once a month with Mr. Angelo Lombardo, Traffic Engineer, Ms. Cindy Robins, Deputy Court Clerk, and Ms. Jeanne Snider, Assistant City Attorney, to discuss parking issues throughout the City, as well as Campus area parking issues along with Mr. Rainey Powell, Campus Corner area property owner, and Mr. Jeff Stewart, President of the CCA, to help mitigate parking issues. He said the group has brainstormed a variety of options, but are not quite ready to put them into action. He said enforcement in the area has increased by 25% over this time last year so more citations have been issued to commercial distributors and citizens. He said the group is also reconfiguring commercial parking areas. He said they are working with distributing companies on adjusting their strategies of getting service to the areas. He said Mr. Stewart is also working with distributors across the State on getting product into the area without disrupting commerce.

Captain Gibson said options include making no changes, initiating a night drip delivery system, and increasing commercial parking in the area.

Commercial distributors are making an effort to work with the merchants and there are some unique situations such as liquor distributors that have mandates on when trucks can leave the distributor with the product to make the delivery. He said the goal is to have all commercial vehicles out of the area by 10:00 a.m. to allow citizens utilization of the parking spaces.

Captain Gibson said business owners on Campus Corner have expressed to the Police Department they would like to see meter parking violations enforced until 6:00 p.m., which is consistent with the parking ordinance and what is printed on the meters. He said as a general rule the meter parking is only enforced until 5:00 p.m. He said the Parking Enforcement officer is not a Police Officer and has authority to issue parking citations and deal with parking related issues, but they work until 5:00 p.m. and are off on weekends. He said the Police Department temporarily enforced meters to 6:00 p.m., but has not seen a big increase in citations or big public outcry of support or dissention. He said what makes it difficult is manpower issues as there are only three Parking Enforcement Officers instead of the usual four.

Captain Gibson said parking meter enforcement on Saturdays fall within the boundaries of the ordinance and there is dispute among Campus Corner merchants as to whether or not Saturday enforcement should be done. He said Saturday enforcement occurred one time in April 2011, but has not been an ongoing process for variety of reasons. He said there seems to be a public perception that Saturday enforcement is still ongoing and it simply is not. He said the Police Department decided that until the stakeholders in the area are in consensus of what they want to do, the issue will be tabled until they were re-approached with a legitimate plan that has support of both the merchants and the real estate owners.

Captain Gibson said pros of Saturday enforcement are it keeps customers cycling through the area and allows more customers to partake in the area allowing more revenue for the merchants. He said Saturday enforcement also brings the City an increase in revenue, but revenue is not the point of the enforcement, compliance is the goal. He said parking is a significant quality of life issue that affects the parties involved. He said some cons are conflict between the Police Department and Campus Corner stakeholders as to what they really want and decreased time for citizens to enjoy the area. He said the Police Department is recommending no change to the Saturday enforcement of the ordinance. He said the Police Department is a service agency and there are many ordinances they enforce and many they do not enforce on a routine basis because open dialogue with the

community tells them this is not something the community wants enforced. He said instead of changing the ordinance, he would like to sit down, have open dialogue, and conduct selective enforcement.

Captain Gibson said the problem of response time of Parking Enforcement personnel is because three Parking Officers patrol 200 square miles daily. He said the Police Department has made some adjustments by breaking the 200 square miles patrolled for parking into three districts with two officers serving the central district, which includes the Campus Corner area. He said the Campus Corner area has just under 200 parking spaces with a certain number of people (merchants/property owners) wanting to use those spaces, which sometimes outnumber the number of spaces available.

The Police Department started a rigorous education campaign in January 2011. Captain Gibson said parking enforcement has a three way approach, 1) educating the public, 2) issuing warnings and citations, and 3) impounding vehicles, which is a last resort. He said Police Officers went door-to-door, passing out flyers in the core downtown Campus area, downtown Norman district, and areas surrounding the areas to include fraternities and sororities. He said a press release was printed in the Norman Transcript, the Daily Oklahoman, and was discussed on News Channels 4 and 9, and at Downtown Merchants Association meetings.

Captain Gibson said on February 1, 2011, the Police Department began enhanced enforcement and officers were instructed to give each violation every benefit of the doubt and load the area with warnings, but not issue citations. The warning included the fact that beginning March 1, 2011, citations would be issued for violations. He said flyers were handed out to commercial distributors with open dialogue on repercussions of violations in March. He said on March 1st officer began issuing citations, which were up 25% on Asp Avenue, Boyd Street, White Street, and Buchanan Street. He said the Police Department will be re-evaluating these strategies on August 1st with Campus Corner merchants/owners.

Captain Gibson said the City is looking at future use of a Smart Meter System and initiating OU game day safe zones. He said safe zones would better protect pedestrians from being hit by vehicles by placing water barricades along sidewalks. He said the barricades are easy and quick to set up, cost effective, come in a variety of colors, and are attractive.

Mr. Jeff Stewart said response times and enforcement has greatly increased. He said there has been a lot of interaction between the CCA, merchants, police, property owners, and parking officers. He said there are a lot of plusses with very few minuses. He said education will be an ongoing battle as there will always be a change in population, change in tenants, change in students, etc. He said the CCA is formulating a packet of information to distribute to tenants and owners to educate them on a multitude of issues including educating employees on where to park. He said as long as the lines of communication remain open and education is ongoing, parking problems will continue to improve.

Councilmember Dillingham asked if there had been many problems with merchants being unable to get their deliveries and Mr. Stewart said there will always be an exception to the rule, but CCA is working to make it easier for the merchant and the commercial distributors. He said distributing companies are looking at re-routing their deliveries to get trucks off Campus Corner before 10:00 a.m. and returning for late afternoon deliveries instead of sitting at a spot for hours delivering to multiple businesses. He said the CCA will send letters to all the companies, prior to OU classes beginning, reminding them the goal is to get deliveries in and out by 10:00 a.m. He said he would like to stop commercial trucks from straddling parking spots and plugging the meters, which they can legally do under the current parking ordinance.

Mr. Powell said a particular problem spot is 570 Buchanan Street, where parking spots are commercially zoned until 10:00 a.m., but commercial trucks frequently park there after 10:00. He said the businesses receiving the deliveries are not adhering to the 10:00 a.m. rule and landlords have limitations on enforcement.

Councilmember Dillingham said she has had several comments from other restaurants/bars that are having difficulty with the limited delivery times and asked if problems are still ongoing. Mr. Keith Allen, Brother's Restaurant, said he gets afternoon deliveries, but the delivery trucks are usually only in the metered spot for ten minutes. He said after 1:30 p.m. or 2:00 p.m. the street is empty so that is not a problem. He said the biggest problem is deliveries between 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., the height of business where you do not want delivery trucks in the area, period. Mr. Stewart agreed and said all that is needed is for someone to visit with the business owner regarding the problem. Mr. Allen said Fridays are the worst day for deliveries and merchants need to get orders in Monday through Thursday.

Mr. Stewart felt the stumbling block is merchants not passing on information to commercial distributors. He said they are also not telling their employees not to park in the Campus Corner customer spaces and the employees plug meters while working. Chairman Griffith said employees do tend to park in the metered spaces and asked where they could park instead. Mr. Stewart said the Presbyterian Church and Mr. Powell said the CCA had distributed a map to businesses depicting all the parking options, some of which are free. He said there is a prohibition on employee parking anywhere designated as customer parking, which includes meter spaces. Mr. Allen asked how that was enforced and Mr. Powell said it is not right now, but the Campus area needs to set up cameras to catch employees and begin enforcement. He said the CCA has the ability, under their leases, to fine the merchants \$25 for violations with the idea that the merchant would charge that fee to their employee and provide education to the employee. Chairman Griffith asked about the fee at Presbyterian Church and Mr. Stewart said \$2.00 per day, but users can obtain monthly fees, semester fees, etc. Chairman Griffith asked if Campus Corner merchants offered incentives to employees by offsetting some of that cost and Mr. Stewart said he pays for his employees and tracks them by requesting a receipt. Mr. Stewart said commercial vendors are doing better than employees on parking issues. There were many suggestions on ways to curtail employees parking in metered spaces, but the reality is communication and education between employer and employee. One suggestion was to increase the price of the meter to deter students and employees from parking in the spaces.

Mr. Jerry Hatter, owner of Balfour's, suggested placing signs on every other meter with commercial parking times to warn citizens that they can not park in that space until after 10:00 a.m. Officer Gibson said there is always an aesthetic issue with signage on Campus Corner, but the City and CCA are discussing changing some of those commercial areas so they did not want to make sign changes until that is assessed. Mr. Powell suggested placing a placard or sticker on the meters and Mr. Stewart said that could be an option. Councilmember Dillingham said most of her calls are from constituents that go into Starbucks, for instance, and do not see that the space is reserved for commercial parking and they receive a citation. Chairman Griffith suggested painting the curbs with bold lettering designating the spot is for commercial parking. Mr. Powell said he preferred a sign on every affected meter placed where the money is inserted and easily seen. Councilmember Dillingham said the City would need to know how many meters and the cost of the placard for each meter.

Mr. Allen said he has been in business for 29 years and there has never been enough parking on Campus Corner and a parking garage is needed. Captain Gibson asked if a shuttle system had been contemplated and Mr. Allen felt that was a great idea. Mr. Powell felt there was more parking on Campus Corner than ever before and Mr. Allen said 1,500 restaurant seats have been opened during his tenure and unlike other restaurants in town that have to have designated parking to open, Campus Corner does not because of the way it is zoned. He said you can turn a clothing store into a restaurant, increase the number of seats, etc., and not have to worry about parking.

Councilmember Spaulding asked if customers would utilize a garage and Mr. Allen said yes. Councilmember Spaulding asked if a private developer was interested in building a parking garage or as a private enterprise and asked if it was even economically feasible. Mr. Allen said he was not sure, but no one wants to ante up the money. Mr. Powell felt it would not be economically feasible as a private enterprise due to cost of construction and overhead. He said it would make good money during home football games days, but probably not the rest of the year. Mr. Steve Lewis, City Manager, said a parking garage would have to be a joint venture between the City of Norman, CCA, OU, and the Presbyterian Church. Mr. Powell suggested a self-imposed property tax.

Councilmember Dillingham turned the discussion back to Saturday enforcement and was in agreement not to change the ordinance, but continue selective enforcement. She said there needs to be a press release stating the City is not enforcing Saturday parking on Campus Corner. Mr. Powell said property owners want Saturday enforcement and Councilmember Dillingham said the tenants she has spoken to are telling her they do not want it because customers are complaining. Mr. Powell said employees parking in customer spaces is a monitoring problem so Saturday enforcement is necessary because business owners, especially on the busiest day of the week, have better things to do than walk around monitoring where their employees park. Councilmember Dillingham encouraged everyone to keep their options open and continue open dialogue.

Mr. Powell said the Campus Corner area needs maps on the street or sidewalk showing available parking spaces with costs and time limits for each. Councilmember Dillingham asked if the CCA could develop a map scheme for the Committee to review and Mr. Powell said yes. Mr. Stewart suggested selling advertising on the signs to offset the cost and Mr. Lewis said there would need to be basic rules on who could advertise.

Mr. Powell suggested continuing discussion on an overlay district where ordinances can be written for specific, unique areas and not be imposed on the entire City.

Items submitted for the record

1. PowerPoint presentation entitled, "Parking," Norman Police Department
2. E-mail dated July 13, 2011, from Joe Gill, owner of Joe's Taverna
3. E-mail dated July 13, 2011, from H. Rainey Powell

MISCELLANEOUS DISCUSSION.

None

The meeting adjourned at 7:03 p.m.